

OBJECTIVE 3:
Increase the level of parental, community and political engagement in and support of school improvement so that all children have an opportunity to achieve at the highest levels.

Research findings suggest students, no matter their background or economic status, perform best when they are in schools where adults are supportive and actively involved. State and national leaders recognize the importance of connecting parents and community leaders to schools as a key to increasing achievement among all students. SC has enacted several laws to stimulate parent and community involvement programs in public schools including:

- The 1977 Education Finance Act required the creation of School Improvement Councils (SICs) comprised of parents and community leaders responsible for school improvement.
- The Education Accountability Act of 1998 created annual school and school district report cards as tools for communities to utilize for school improvement.
- The 2000 Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act provided local and state responsibilities to increase parental involvement in schools.

On a national level, goal eight of the 2000 National Education Goals encouraged schools to promote partnerships increasing parental involvement and a key component in the federal No Child Left Behind Act is informing parents of options for their children's education.

The 2010 goal is founded on one belief - ALL students can achieve. While many South Carolinians believe the goal is achievable, some question the level of parental and community support. In a 2001 opinion survey of 3,500 education and community leaders, 96 percent responded that "businesses, parents, elected officials, administrators, teachers and students must all take responsibility for making our schools better, and all must be held accountable for their success or failure." Most said they were willing to become involved and were more likely to do so at the invitation of teachers or other school or district personnel at the local level. State legislators, inundated with information and under tight deadlines for decision making, are vital links for continuous school improvement in local communities and the state level.

Structured and positive dialogue between schools and communities can address many complex issues of such as funding sufficiency, recruiting and retaining quality teachers, poverty, assessment tools, and cultural and socioeconomic differences. When school and community members talk and listen to each other, they gain a deeper understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and build bonds essential to effective schools. To facilitate solutions to complex issues, the EOC proposes the following public awareness initiatives:

- *Continue to provide information and advocacy for achievement issues to members of the General Assembly, local government elected officials, citizens without children in school and parents.*
- *Meet annually with legislative caucuses and leaders to inform them of educational progress and needs.*

OBJECTIVE 4:
Provide the resources and professional development so that databased decision-making is implemented at all levels within the educational system.

The EAA established "a performance based accountability system for public education which focuses on improving teaching and learning so that students are equipped with a strong academic foundation" [Section 59-18-100]. Data requirements associated with such a system include:


- publishing annual school and district report cards containing "clear and specific information about school and district academic performance to parents and the public" [59-18-110(2)];
- requiring school districts to create accountability systems "to stimulate quality teaching and learning practices and target assistance to low performing schools" [59-18-110(3)]; and
- expanding the "ability to evaluate the system and to conduct in depth studies on implementation, efficiency, and the effectiveness of academic improvement efforts" [59-18-110(6)].

School and district ratings are based on student assessment data. A variety of other information regarding teachers, students, and parents also are published on school and district report cards. Effective use of report card data for educational improvement is encouraged and communicated. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act also requires the collection and effective use of data for continuous education improvement. Recent studies by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) of six school districts in five different states that had instituted strategies to analyze and use their state assessment data revealed student test score gains of 1 to 13 percentage points. One district had annual gains of 2.2 percentage points for all students and 3.5 percentage points for African American students. Easily available data in flexible formats are more likely to be utilized. Many states have "data warehouses" in which student assessment and a variety of school operations data are linked together in a single source that is accessible to educators, parents, and community members. SC has been engaged in the development of a data warehouse for several years. The basic design, including baseline year data, has been developed. Actions needed to make the warehouse fully operational are:

1. load and link additional years of data;
2. further develop query software for users having various levels of access; and
3. enable Web access to educators, parents, and community members.

\$1.2 million was appropriated annually for the project from 1999-2001 and funds are now needed to complete it. To address these issues, the EOC proposes the following actions:

- *Amend the SC school and district report cards and when appropriate, align the State's accountability system to incorporate requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.*
- *Develop measurable benchmarks and monitor performance related to the 2010 goal, using the 2002 3rd, 6th, and 8th grade classes as the benchmark group to understand interim progress.*
- *Working with local school districts and the State Department of Education, implement a data warehouse with multiple access levels for educators, the public, policy makers and parents to monitor student performance data.*

THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
 Established by the Education Accountability Act of 1998, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan legislative committee made up of 18 educators, business persons, elected officials who are appointed by the Legislature and governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC's educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of public schools.

MISSION
Our mission is to effect the dramatic, results-based and continuous improvement of South Carolina's educational system by creating a truly collaborative environment of parents, educators, community leaders and policy makers.

VALUES

- A sole focus on what is best for students.
- A belief in broad-based inclusion and collaboration.
- A belief in standards, assessments, and publicly known results.
- The implementation of research-and-fact-based solutions that improve results.
- A passion for immediate, dramatic and continuous improvement that is unaffected by partisan politics.

2002-2003 MEMBERSHIP		
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South Carolina Education Oversight Committee



Objectives & Critical Actions

2002-2003



SOUTH CAROLINA’S 2010 EDUCATION GOAL

South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country.

South Carolina has an extraordinary opportunity. As our economy moves from agriculture, textiles and light manufacturing, our state can reshape itself to succeed in the new century. We must have a workforce that understands and utilizes information technologies, is able to solve problems creatively, and exhibits the ethical, responsible behaviors our communities and employers need.

Every facet of community well being—social, health, civic, and economic vitality—depends upon the education our young people achieve. Yet, for too long, our school performance has not matched the aspirations our state holds for her people.

Through local and state bipartisan efforts, our state is rising to the challenge. We are examining the way we teach our children, the resources we provide our schools, and the aspirations we hold for ourselves. The cumulative impact of accountability systems, support for high quality teaching, parental involvement and strong leadership is showing results.

We are on the journey to success but we must stay vigilant. States that are showing significant improvements over time have stayed the course. We cannot be deterred by fads and individual agendas. SC depends upon our collective will.

How do we measure progress toward SC's school performance?

Nine performance measures are linked to the 2010 goal.

- 1. South Carolina will rank in the top half of states on NAEP examinations and other international and national measures.
- 2. Nine out of ten South Carolina students will score at or above grade level on PACT.
- 3. South Carolina will rank in the top half of states on the SAT/ACT.
- 4. AP and IB passage rates will be at or above the national average.
- 5. South Carolina's high school completion rate will be at or above the national average.
- 6. South Carolina's dropout rate will be in the lower half of states.
- 7. South Carolina will be in the top half of states in the percentage of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma.

- 8. South Carolina will rank in the top half of states in freedom from drugs, weapons, violence and teacher victimization by students.
- 9. The gap among the achievements of students of different racial / ethnic groups and different economic status will be eliminated.

Are we making gains? Yes! Among our successes are:

- From 2001 to 2001, there were 3% more students scoring Basic or Above on PACT and 1% more scoring Proficient and above.
- SC’s average SAT score has risen 30 points in the last four years.
- SC’s AP performance is near the national average with 59 % of exams scoring a three or above; the national rate is 61 %.
- SC’s participation rate in the International Baccalaureate program is increasing rapidly.
- The achievement gap is narrowing slowly.
- SC’s accountability system was rated B+ by *Education Week* in 2002, one of the nation's top five.
- SC’s assessment program was rated 8th in the nation by the *Princeton Review* (2002).
- SC’s content standards were rated 3rd in the nation by the *Fordham Foundation* (2000)
- SC has 1,291 nationally board-certified teachers - the third highest in the nation.

What are the areas of concern or barriers to our progress?

SC continues to face barriers in its move forward. Students have difficulty making the transition to middle school and their performance begins to diminish in middle school. The opportunities for parent involvement and their participation rates also decline in the middle school years. Higher content standards, expectations for attendance and the impact of cumulative under performance stymie too many 9th graders. The high 9th grade retention rate and subsequent low high school graduation rate are signals that many students are not succeeding.

Teacher shortages frustrate us all. SC faces critical shortages in the areas of mathematics, science and special education. Some geographic areas are unable to attract sufficient numbers of teachers; others cannot compete with higher-paying neighboring school districts. The schools and districts exhibiting the lowest student achievement typically have the highest rates of turnover among administrators and teachers.

As the baby boomers move closer to retirement, SC will experience more dramatic teacher shortages and shortages of administrators.

What actions is the EOC undertaking to continue SC's progress?

OBJECTIVE 1:

Advocate legislation and align budget recommendations to implement systems and structures to ensure that there is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom and highly qualified leaders in schools and districts.

Providing quality educators in all schools will improve student academic achievement more than any other single policy initiative. One study states teacher expertise, more than any other single factor, accounts for 40% of student achievement. Even when taking into account poverty and language status, the research overwhelmingly supports teacher preparation and teacher certification as having the greatest impact in reading and mathematics. Using 2001 school report card data, the EOC researched how experience, retention and compensation of teachers in a school district affects student achievement. Districts having more teachers with advanced degrees, low teacher turnover, and expending a higher percentage of funds on teacher salaries generally had higher absolute rating indices. Districts having more teachers with out-of-field permits had lower absolute rating indices.

Developing strong leaders in schools and districts is crucial. Principals and superintendents are held accountable under the EAA for the level of student achievement. Securing qualified principals to lead our schools will become even more challenging in the years ahead. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 40% of current public school administrators are expected to retire in the next 10 years. Some districts are planning ahead by identifying teachers who can succeed in administration and providing them leadership development opportunities. However, a statewide effort is needed to attract and retain qualified leaders and teachers in all schools.

SC should have a comprehensive recruitment and retention system. A central location is needed to analyze teacher supply and demand trends within geographic regions and by certification areas. Currently, no sole agency or entity is responsible for determining if an adequate supply of qualified teachers exists, projecting future needs, and developing innovative teacher recruitment strategies. Second, there must be an immediate attempt to attract quality leaders and teachers to schools and districts that do not have qualified teachers in every classroom and do not have the fiscal wealth to provide competitive salaries. In a 1999 national study, 20% of teachers at high-poverty schools left teaching or moved to other schools in comparison to 12.5% in low-poverty schools. Providing alternative and innovative approaches to rewarding performance and professional advancement should be the core component of such a system. To address these issues, the EOC proposes the following initiatives for the 2003 legislative session:

- Fund a manpower planning effort to identify teacher needs by certification category within districts and geographic regions.
- Provide professional development so that governing boards take actions that promote the success of historically underachieving students and high levels of community and parental support for higher student achievement.
- Fund a pilot program to identify ways to recruit and retain the most highly qualified leaders and teachers in every school.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Define sufficient funding for schools and develop models for shared responsibility between state and local governments.

Since 1997 *Education Week* annually has graded each state on many indicators including adequacy and equity of funding. In its 2002 *Quality Counts* publication, South Carolina scored a B- in adequacy of resources and a C in equity of resources. Using 2001 report card data, an EOC review of per pupil expenditures of SC school districts revealed significant variations between districts in the mean or average per pupil expenditure level. The gap between the 5th and 95th percentile in school per pupil expenditure reaches about \$3600. Although South Carolina ranks 34th in the nation in per pupil expenditures, about 95% of all students are in districts with per pupil expenditures below the US average.

The 1977 legislation creating the Education Finance Act (EFA) intended that the EFA would provide the “defined minimum program” to all public schools students, regardless of their geographic location. For the current fiscal year, the legislature appropriated \$1.6 billion to the EFA. A “minimum” education system will likely not create the significant and dramatic improvements in student academic achievement needed to reach the 2010 goal.

Moreover, since passage of the EFA, there also have been significant legislative and budgetary changes in our public education system. With revenue shortfalls, the base student cost of the EFA has not kept pace with actual inflation. In 1984, the General Assembly adopted the Education Improvement Act (EIA) which now provides more than \$540 million annually in revenue for schools. In 1998, the General Assembly enacted the EAA which established a comprehensive accountability system including assessments, standards, technical assistance, professional development, public reporting and rewards and interventions. Unlike in 1977 when student bus drivers were employed, today the expense of employing adult school bus drivers has resulted in school districts paying for approximately 61% of the costs of the school bus system.

Do all South Carolina school districts have sufficient resources to assure that every student can achieve at high academic levels and to meet the requirements of the standards-based accountability system?

To answer this question, the EOC proposes the following action items for the 2002-03 fiscal year to address changes in the state's funding system since 1977 with the immediate need to improve student academic achievement:

- Review professional recommendations for the base student cost and develop a model based on student services.
- Monitor study committees and legislation proposing to amend the current school funding system and advocate EOC critical positions.